

Freeway meeting rescheduled for next week

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A South Mountain Loop 202 meeting that was set for July and cancelled at the last minute because of a shooting, has been rescheduled for next week.

What economic impact the South Mountain Loop 202 would have, if built, will be one of the subjects of the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team meeting set for 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 12 at the South Mountain Community College Student Union, 7050 S. 24th St.

The Student Union is near where police say Rodney Smith, 22, walked into the college computer lab on July 24, got into an argument and shot three people. He was taken into custody by police a few minutes later at his family's home near 24th Avenue.

The advisory team has been meeting at South Mountain Community College since the beginning of the year without incident.

The Arizona Department of Transportation created the advisory team in 2001 when it decided to update a 1985 freeway plan to take into account changes over the past two decades.

The freeway is planned to connect Interstate 10 in Ahwatukee Foothills, travel west through a corner of South Mountain and then north reconnect with I-10 near 55th Avenue.

An updated draft of the environmental impact statement is hung up in negotiations with the Gila River Indian Community, who consider sacred South Mountain and the ridges that the freeway must cut through.

Meanwhile, ADOT continues moving ahead, briefing the advisory team on issues like economic impact.

Also on the agenda is a discussion of existing utilities in the right of way and how they would be relocated.

The freeway, originally estimated to cost \$900 million, has grown in cost and complexity with as many as 317 Ahwatukee Foothills homes now slated for demolition to make way for the larger-than-originally-planned freeway, which carries a price tag of at least \$1.7 billion.